

Patience and Endurance



Remain Alert
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Remain Alert

"Be sober. Be vigilant because the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

When Jesus or his disciples healed in the Scriptures the people cured experienced a manifestation of their physical release from Satan's bondage instantly or almost instantly. This aspect of God's nature was a novel experience for most of them and they needed the tangible reality in order to believe. Nowadays, though, it is not the norm. Of course it would be dandy if a *miraculous* healing took place in every one who believed. However, a quick fix may not be in a person's over-all best interests, and God wants long term results for us, not just temporary relief.

The Bible says that a person cannot please God without his/her faith being active. This includes persevering in faith towards, never against, His will. Since Jesus' resurrection, God sees every one of us as being whole, even if we do not. Since He cannot lie, if *He* ever says that we are deformed He will call it into being with His words, thus creating it forever. What we have to do is connect the two images, starting with our sense reality but ending with His spiritual one.

"In this manner therefore pray: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name! Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..." (Matthew 6:9-10a)

"The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, endurance/patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, (and) self-control. Against such there is no Law and those who are Christ's (already) have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-25)

We have to learn to trust in the Lord enough to be ever conscious of these three things:

- (1) He wants us all to be well and strong,
- (2) In order to please Him we have to sustain and exercise our faith, regardless of the amount of time that it takes to see a finished result, and
- (3) whenever we begin to accept any ideas contrary to these goals, we must repent immediately and get ourselves back on His track.

Without doing these three things we cannot even expect that our conditions will improve, except temporarily.

Address the Problem Directly

Jesus once told a fig tree that it never would bear fruit ever again, seeing a present physical situation, yet speaking a future one into tangible existence—as His Own birth, life, and death had been prophesied for centuries. Once more, it is vital to recognize and understand that Jesus employed the power behind His words, coupled with His faith and patience, as the catalyst to bring into being what He desired. Jesus did this in front of His disciples on purpose, not because He wanted a tree to die, rather, so that they would remember what He did. And, in this instance for them to perceive how long the change in the tree came to pass. Not everything that Jesus wanted to happen was physically noticeable immediately. Nevertheless, the instant He spoke these directions, coupled with the belief that what He communicated would indeed occur, the evolution started and eventually the change was visible.

"Now the next day, when (Jesus and the disciples) had come out from Bethany He was hungry and seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves for it was not the season for figs. In response, Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again,' and His disciples heard it.

So they came to Jerusalem.... [Jesus drives the moneychangers out of the temple.] ... When evening had come He went out of the city.

Now, in the morning, as they passed by they saw the fig tree, dried up from the roots and Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Teacher, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.'

So, Jesus answered and said to them, "Have the same faith God does, for assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain (i.e. any obstacle or problem), 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes those things which he says will be done he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. And, whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone forgive him, that Your Father in Heaven may also forgive you. But, if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your sins.'" (Mark 11:12-14, 19-26)

Jesus and His disciples were walking along the road from Bethany to Jerusalem and He paused to get some fruit on a fig tree. When He found none He told the tree that it never would bear fruit again. Was He doing this deliberately? Of course, Jesus never said an idle word. Why did Jesus talk to a tree? He was setting up a situation to teach His followers several things later. They heard His words but either ignored them or tucked them away, because no one commented on what should have been quite an unexpected speech for them to hear.

Jesus spoke to a plant, which on the surface seemed very strange. However, in that same episode He told His disciples to address inanimate objects, a "mountain"--the obstacle standing in the way of what God and they wanted. They had witnessed Jesus do this before. As well as with Lazarus' corpse, He spoke directly to the wind and the sea when He wanted them to be calm. Jesus regularly spoke to things as well as people, and commanded his disciples to do likewise. Haven't you ever talked to your body, your car, or a traffic light, etc.? It's the same thing. If it isn't, why not? Aren't you wanting to make reality change to suit yourself? The difference is that you only want things to change; most likely either you do not really believe that they will, or are astonished if they do. Regardless, you probably did not exert *genuine* faith, only hope or frustration concerning the outcome.

Returning to the fig tree, after Jesus addressed it the group continued into Jerusalem where they spent the entire day. In the evening they returned to Bethany, most likely by following the same route as that morning. Since the word 'evening' was used, instead of 'night', the fig tree probably was visible to them. There is no recorded statement, however, of any of the men commenting on any discernible difference in the tree at that time. But the next morning as they passed on the road for the third time, Peter exclaimed that the tree had changed. It had withered completely. The Bible states that the tree was dead starting at its roots--from where it grew and received its nourishment, strength, and life support. Like the two houses mentioned previously who weathered a storm, the transformation began in the tree's foundation, where it could not have been witnessed.

Jesus took another opportunity to instruct His disciples about the value of words to the Kingdom of God. They were what God used to create everything. He spoke it into visible existence to the human spectrum. However, this story has been placed in this particular chapter because of its additional message, namely, Jesus' patience. Since God the Father and Jesus both always believe that what They say will come to pass it will. They never worry about the timing. Therefore, it did not matter how long it took to achieve the desired results. Jesus never stopped believing that what He said would come to pass. Likewise, the Trinity never stops believing in what They want to occur just because it takes what we consider to be a long time to become noticeable. Unlike ours, Their faith does not ever waver.

"Beloved, do not forget this one thing: that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (II Peter 3:8)

"As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him, for He knows our frame, He remembers that we are (only) dust. As for man, his days are like grass. As a flower of the field so it flourishes, for the wind passes over it and it is gone and its place remembers it no more.

But, the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children to such as keep His Covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:13-18)

"But, without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He IS (Exodus 3:14) and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

It took time for a change in the fig tree to be evident since the metamorphosis started in the roots where it could not be observed. It was possible for someone to think that no transformation whatsoever was taking place. In fact, as the men passed by the fig tree the second time, apparently no one but Jesus knew that it was. Also, Jesus was not the person who remarked on the mutation. He did not stop His apostles and make them notice what had happened. He had absolute confidence that the tree would change, no matter how long that took. He did not need to see it in order to believe it. Jesus may not have given the tree any more attention if not for Peter. To Jesus, the moment that He spoke what He did to the fig tree it never would have fruit on it ever again. He never once doubted that He would, in time, see the results of His words, for He spoke to the tree in complete assurance.

"What You have spoken has happened. There, you see it!" (Jeremiah 32:24b)

Therefore, we not only should petition God to heal our minds or bodies, we should address the diseases that attack us directly, even if we feel silly doing so. And, as a preventive measure, we should be blocking any others that might try to do so in the future. Initially we may feel stupid talking to cancer (or whatever), but Jesus Himself would not. Therefore, the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts and minds will not either.

"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher." (Matthew 10:25a)

"I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven." (Matthew 16:19)

What will you choose to do about this instruction? Believe and receive it for yourself, or reject and deny the power behind your communication? And, after you decide, how will you react? How would Jesus act if He were there with you? Well, surprise, He is. Knowing this, will you decide to help or hinder His wishes to see you whole? Whatever you choose to believe, do not do two things: Never judge others who do not accept this spiritual wisdom, nor allow Satan too ever make you feel guilty.

Receive Jesus' Joy

The Word equates the joy of God with His strength--an aspect of His nature that never quits nor despairs about the outcome of any situation. Therefore, when we wish to imitate God the Father as Jesus of Nazareth did we also must seek for, find, and use that facet of His nature. Joy is not an emotion like happiness, which ebbs and flows depending on circumstances or people's moods. Rather, joy is listed as being one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is a constant substance that helps to sustain all of the others in order to complete the character of the Trinity. If the Bible lists the fruits in order, then joy is second in importance only to Godly love, ranked even above faith.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

*"You show me the path of Life. In Your presence is fullness of joy,"
(Psalm 16:11)*

When these verses are read in conjunction, the word 'joy' clearly can be substituted in meaning for the word 'strength', without altering the message. Therefore, trying to imitate the Lord's joy is akin to achieving His sustained power, and vice versa. Jesus alluded to this when He said the following to His disciples during His last time with them on earth before He surrendered Himself to Satan's clutches. Jesus very purposely stated that He was leaving mankind what He Himself used to resist all temptation in opposition to God's will. His disciples were supposed to remember those exact words and pass them on.

"These things I have spoken to you that My joy (or, strength) may remain in you and your joy (or, strength) may be full." (John 15:11)

"I come to you and these things I speak in the world that they have My joy (or, strength) fulfilled in themselves." (John 17:13)

When Jesus lived on the earth He was confined in a single human body. Therefore, He only could be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit, though, actually resides in the spiritual heart of every believer. This was the reason that Jesus told Peter that it actually was better for his followers if He went away. Consequently, since Jesus' death and resurrection, all of us always have access to the entire Trinity at any given moment.

"I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you but if I depart I will send Him to you." (John 16:7)

"(God) gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength (or, 'joy')." (Isaiah 40:29)

"Therefore, be strong (or, joyful) in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

"Rejoice (or, Be strong) in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known to God. And, the peace of God which surpasses all (human) understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if anything is praiseworthy, meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:4-9)

Continue to Persevere

Yielding to any affliction is far, far easier than resisting it; just as it is much simpler to tear down any structure than it was to build. Yet, if we honestly want to please the God of the Bible, the Bible teaches that we must continue to refrain from doing or communicating anything that might not contribute to a full repair of our bodies, no matter how long that may take.

"Cast your burden on the Lord (I Peter 5:7) and He shall sustain you. He never shall permit the righteous to be shaken in their faith)." (Psalm 55:22)

Even if we never become aware of our healing, Jesus still died to exchange not only His blood and soul for ours, but His disfigured body for our complete restoration at the same time. Just like accepting His gift to save our souls and spirits, it is up to us each individually to decide *how* we will embrace that He suffered physically to restore our frames. He directed us to recognize and receive both effects, not just one of them.

"I received from the Lord that I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, 'Take, eat. This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.' For, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death/Death till He comes.

Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord, but let (people) examine (themselves) and so let (them) eat of the bread and drink of the wine, for he who drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many are dead." (I

Corinthians 11:23-30)

We also have to take any medicine, undergo any therapy required, as well as exercise regularly in addition to constantly and consistently agreeing with God's Word for our bodies to *confirm* the health that Jesus substituted for affliction when He died so horribly. Being "born again" in our spirits is not the main issue that this book is addressing. The precise topic is whether we merely want to *wait* for a physical restoration in Heaven or do we want to strive to obtain it now? Which decision will please God *more*? Was Jesus tormented physically for nothing?

"(Jesus) was teaching in one of the synagogues, on the Sabbath and behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bent over and could in no way straighten) herself up. But, when Jesus saw her He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity, and He laid His hands on her and immediately she was made straight and glorified God.

But, the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days, in which men ought to work. Therefore, come and be healed on them and not on the Sabbath day.'

The Lord answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you loose his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it away to water it? So, ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 13:10-16)

Okay, you still might believe that that happened only when Jesus was here in person. However, what does the *Word* teach that the Trinity wants for us now? The same thing; God never changes (*Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6*) nor does He play favorites. (*Galatians 2:6*) Remember? Therefore, if Jesus healed other people before, He still wants to presently. Jesus, the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit earnestly desire what is the absolute best for us, which includes healing and perseverance towards perfect physical, emotional, and mental, as well as spiritual health.

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:28)

"Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus--the originator and finisher of our faith--Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For, consider Him Who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself lest you become weary in your souls." (Hebrews 12:1-3)

In order to manifest permanent visible improvements in our conditions we

have to try to sustain a level of faith commensurate with what we now know are God's stated desires, not in agreement with our ever-changing emotions. The Bible affirms that for the Lord ever to be able to complete our physical restorations we dare not submit to our negative sense knowledge above His aspirations or abilities, as He directs our recovery cell by cell. The initial mental decision to accept this is relatively easy; continuing to stay faithful and disciplined is much, much more difficult. The journey may be long and the road quite rough, but watching our faith in action always is awesome and unstoppable.

"Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed." (Hebrews 12:12-13)

"But, be doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves. For, if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror--for, he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." (James 1:22-25)

We have to acknowledge what is reflected in a mirror at any given instant, because doing otherwise is lying. Nonetheless, the Bible instructs that we are to compare what we experience moment by moment with what the Bible says that we are in God's eyes. What we are to Him is how we should be. We may be handicapped in some way right now. But, the Word still says that Jesus already healed us from every physical affliction through His stripes on the cross. Therefore, we are at point 'X', while God says that He sees us to be at point 'Y'. Employing His wisdom we can get there with faith, diligence, and lots and lots and lots and lots of patience.

This notion is comparable to earthly parents looking at their child playing in a sandbox. They not only see the child as they are, but imagine and envision the adult that they desire him/her to become. The parents do not negate where the child stands in his/her present stage of development. However, the adults' desires only will be realized when their child learns to become increasingly self-disciplined and follows good training to attain the ultimate goal.

In conclusion, Jesus of Nazareth obeyed His Fathers' instructions without any deviation and lived without ever disobeying Him. By doing so, not only did Jesus exist without ever succumbing to diseases of any kind affecting His mind or body, He also was able to deliver others. However, in order to achieve this total health, Jesus had to be flawless in His thoughts, words and actions and keep them obedient to God's desires. We already have discussed that particular ailments attack certain people, although any reasoning behind it is still mysterious to medical science. However, in God's Word--the Bible--we can find ample evidence that regardless of why we become sick, God does indeed want us to be completely healthy. He can and will help us discard what we or someone else has done against His will for our lives and guide us how to copy what Jesus did to never become sick.